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Item 3 (a) of the provisional agenda*
Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly: priority theme: poverty eradication

Statement submitted by Al-Hakim Foundation, NGO in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/CN.5/2011/1.

10-66502 (E) 131210 161210

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Statement

1. The problem of poverty, with such associated phenomena as violence, ignorance, disease, family breakdown, and migration, constitutes a global threat and a major challenge to the ability of the international community to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, which all States resolved to reach by the target date of 2015.

2. After 10 years of striving to achieve those Goals, numerous individuals and social groups in many States around the world continue to sink under the burden of poverty and suffer from marginalization and deprivation of various kinds, including discrimination and lack of access to educational opportunities, housing, and health and other services.

3. At the present time, when the problem of poverty is being compounded by various international crises, including the global economic crisis and natural disasters resulting from climate change, all those problems constitute a real threat to global efforts to foster sustainable social development.

4. The global financial crisis has led to the creation of yet more barriers to the integration of millions of already deprived poor people around the world into their societies and access to low-cost, high-quality social services, including basic education, health care, safe water, sanitation and housing.

5. There is a disturbing increase in the number of newly poor and marginalized persons who have lost jobs or income as a result of the current crisis. Unemployment and job instability continue to rise, suggesting that millions more will be stripped of the social gains they have made and slide back onto the margins of society and below the poverty line.

6. Given that poverty has become one of the most dangerous threats being faced by the international community, effective solutions and strategies to eradicate it must be not only local but global. Governments, civil society and the private sector must all redouble their efforts both to create economic mechanisms to combat poverty, and to help to protect people from falling into poverty in the first place.

7. Government efforts to fight poverty must not be conducted in isolation from the efforts of society. By the same token, the direct responsibility of States for anti-poverty programmes does not exempt society and its various economic sectors from their social and humanitarian responsibilities with respect to that problem.

8. At a time when more assistance from developed countries is needed, donor Governments, in many cases Governments of the very countries where the current crisis originated, have even more reason to fulfil their obligation to provide assistance to developing and poor countries. At the same time, developing countries must improve their investment climates, implement further administrative and economic reforms, guarantee all their citizens access to such basic services as health care and education, and work to create comprehensive social safety nets for all their citizens without discrimination.

9. On the occasion of the forty-ninth session of the Commission for Social Development, the Al-Hakim Foundation, one of Iraq's largest civil society organizations, would like to take the opportunity provided by this important international gathering to reiterate the importance of focusing efforts and policies on

addressing the root causes of poverty. Proposed solutions and programmes to combat poverty should concentrate on the creation of real work opportunities rather than on short-term programmes which have limited prospects, and on internationally agreed measures to eradicate global poverty and deprivation, including the following:

(a) All Member States should fulfil their obligation to guarantee all individuals access to primary and secondary education, and should work to strengthen local institutions of higher learning and provide more opportunities for university education and vocational training at reasonable cost.

(b) Efforts should be made to ensure that people who live in poverty have access to production resources and social protection, with a view to enabling them to participate in society and restricting their exposure to exploitation.

(c) In partnership with civil society and the private sector, policies should be devised to allow young people to play an active role in the workforce through training and fellowship programmes. Programmes should be created to provide alternative educational opportunities for children and youth from poor and marginalized segments of society.

(d) Appropriate policies and frameworks should be put in place to ensure the integration and participation of persons with disabilities in economic, social and political life, and to address their health and education needs.

(e) Laws should be promulgated in order to curtail labour exploitation and usury, and to combat trafficking, prostitution and sexual exploitation. Such laws should include provisions based on principles of justice and human rights that criminalize the solicitation of trafficking and prostitution.

(f) Ethical economic principles and laws should be established in order to discourage speculation and encourage national Governments and private companies to adopt socially responsible policies that focus on the common good.

(h) With a view to strengthening the kind of social cohesion and solidarity that leads to social integration, efforts should be made to firmly establish the bases of social justice that are grounded on religious and moral teachings and values and the principles of human rights and human dignity.

10. The Al-Hakim Foundation also wishes to take this opportunity to urge the international community to consider taking guidance from the principles and legal regulations of the revealed religions when designing global anti-poverty strategies. An example would be the teachings of Islam on poverty, economic and social development, and social solidarity, which include the obligation of the rich to make charitable donations to help the poor, the prohibition of usury in order to prevent material exploitation, and numerous other laws designed to reinforce social solidarity. In Iraq, despite the national Government's efforts, many segments of society continue to suffer from poverty and unemployment because of rampant administrative corruption and the absence of a monitoring mechanism to ensure implementation of laws and fair distribution of opportunities for Government employment. The Iraqi Government must also make greater efforts to foster investment and strengthen the role of the private sector. Iraqi non-governmental organizations should be involved in poverty-reduction efforts in respect of which have a lot to offer and could be an important partner. Since its foundation in 2003,

the Al-Hakim Foundation has implemented a number of programmes to combat poverty and assist marginalized segments of society. Its orphan sponsorship programme has benefited approximately 100,000 orphans from poor families. The Foundation has also implemented a number of programmes to help young people begin married life, including its collective marriage programme, which has provided material and financial support to thousands of young persons. The Foundation also supervises educational institutions that provide primary and secondary educational opportunities to thousands of students of both sexes.

11. We close by reiterating our appeal to the international community to increase its generous and much-appreciated efforts to assist Iraq and strengthen the role of Iraq's civil society organizations in efforts to eradicate poverty.

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Item 3 (a) of the provisional agenda*
Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly: priority theme: poverty eradication

Statement submitted by HelpAge International, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/CN.5/2011/1.

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Statement*

1. HelpAge International is a global network of 80 affiliated organizations and over 200 partners. It shares a vision to influence better practice on global ageing, poverty eradication and inclusive development. It works with older people worldwide to help them claim their rights and convey their concerns to policymakers.

2. Eight years after the Second World Assembly on Ageing, held in Madrid in April 2002, older women and men are saying that global ageing deserves more robust action from policymakers and greater recognition as one of the key challenges of the twenty-first century.

3. In November 2010 older peoples leaders from Cambodia, China, India, Myanmar, the Philippines, the Republic of Korea, Thailand and Viet Nam gathered in Viet Nam to share experiences and agree on common issues to take to policymakers. They made a specific call to their Governments and to the G-20 to take action on ageing within the three priority directions of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, and thereby support them to contribute to their children, their grandchildren and to the common good of their countries. They said that ensuring income, credit facilities, health and employment opportunities and enabling legislation for older women and men would not only reduce inequalities but also deliver social cohesion, build institutions and provide economic opportunities for all. They asked for the extension of their right to social security at lower age levels, emphasizing their good stewardship of such regular income. They asked for secure access to health services and low interest credit. They explained how their existing commitment to contribute to family, community and national economies will be greatly enhanced by the extension and greater coverage of existing social security schemes with lower age thresholds, the lifting of health user fees, guaranteed access to low interest credit and recognition of their labour as farmers and carers. They called for legislation to secure their right to social security, health and freedom from discrimination.

Ageing and poverty eradication

4. By 2030, there will be more people over 55 years than children under 15. In most countries of the developing world the greatest level of poverty and inequalities are found in intergenerational households of young children and grandparents. Such households are increasing in number and getting poorer as parents migrate to seek work or are not able to bring up their children because of HIV/AIDS, humanitarian disaster and conflict. Even though older people work until very late in life the absence of social security and health access makes the already chronic poverty of these households more persistent.

5. Why does this matter?

6. Global ageing affects all aspects of economic, social, fiscal and cultural life. While the trend of global ageing is currently most obvious in the developed world, it is in low- and middle-income countries that the global pattern of falling birth rates and rising life expectancy is most rapid.

* Issued without formal editing.

10-66511

7. According to the 2010 global preparedness index worldwide life expectancy at birth has increased by 21 years since 1950, a bigger gain over the past 60 years than humanity has achieved over the previous 6,000. Emerging market countries such as China, Brazil, India, Mexico and the Republic of Korea, are already experiencing a very rapid transition from young to old. For example, according to the Stanford Center on Longevity, life expectancy in China is 73, with almost 28 per cent of its population predicted to be in the older age cohort in 2040. According to *World Population Prospects: the 2008 revision*, in Brazil and Mexico, the over-60 age group will be over 22 per cent of the population by the same date.

8. Member States are committed to reducing the proportion of persons living in extreme poverty by one half by 2015, a commitment which is reiterated in paragraph 48 (a), of the 2002 Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing. Paragraph 48 (b) commits Member States to include older persons and programmes to reach the poverty reduction target. Currently the Millennium Development Goals indicators do not include old age poverty. Poverty data is not generally disaggregated and analysed by age. Furthermore, Millennium Development Goals reports do not routinely report on progress to halve poverty in old age. Nevertheless, data from the poorest countries show that the most extreme poverty levels are concentrated in households with older people and dependent children, in middle-income as well as low-income countries. HelpAge International calculations are that there are approximately 185 million older people living in poverty, and that these numbers are set to rise in line with the demographic transition.

Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing

9. Older women and men with whom HelpAge International works in the global campaign "Age demands action" have consistently called for specific actions under the priority directions of the 2002 Madrid Plan of Action on Ageing. Under the priority direction "ageing and development", they have called for their inclusion in plans to reach the Millennium Development Goals poverty targets, for secure income and for support in humanitarian contexts. Under the priority direction "health and well-being", they have called for equitable and affordable access to health care and support for their caregiving roles; under the priority direction "the enabling environment", they have called for action on their rights, for freedom from discrimination, and for their recognition as contributors.

10. The global "Age demands action" campaign has enabled older people to call for specific changes. Some of the results include concrete commitments for pensions in Bangladesh, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Nepal, the Philippines and Sri Lanka. In 2010, the Philippines Senior Citizen's Act was passed, which commits a pension of $11 a month to the poorest older people; the network of older peoples organizations supported by the Coalition of Services to the Elderly, is maintaining momentum on this issue so the law becomes a reality. In Kenya, action on ageing was enshrined in the revised 2010 Constitution. Following a march to Parliament where older people met the Financial Secretary within the Ministry of Finance and the Director of Pensions, $2.6 million for a non-contributory pension fund for older people was pledged alongside a pension programme for over 30,000 older people.

11. "Age demands action" activities have also led to pledges around the world to implement national ageing policies, many of which are based on the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing. For example, in Fiji consultation meetings

held with older people have led to a manifesto for change, which was discussed at the ministerial level and has resulted in Fijian cabinet action to draft a national policy on ageing. Other results include a promise for better access to doctors in hospitals in Bangladesh, and mobile medical units in South Africa.

Still more to be done

12. Eight years after the Plan of Action there is progress. For example, precisely those countries which are becoming old before they grow rich have agreed to progressively implement the United Nations social protection floor. Implementing the floor through costed long-term programmes to secure basic income, access to health care and support in kind or in transfers in old age, times of disability, unemployment and childhood will be very important to millions of older-headed households across the world. It will be a significant step in alleviating poverty and narrowing the development gap, essential to achieving sustainable global growth.

13. Nevertheless, more must be done to connect action on rapid population ageing to the achievement of global goals on poverty eradication. Unless this happens, in 2015 it is likely that older people will find themselves in the wrong half of the global goal to reduce poverty by one half.

Making connections

14. Links between persistent poverty levels and failure to act on issues affecting older people and those that depend on them can and must be made. HelpAge International programmes and evidence demonstrate how connections between ageing and the range of issues central to the fight against poverty are critical.

15. Middle generation adults leave behind their ageing parents and younger children in "skipped generation" situations; and in chronically poor households that are dependent on infrequent remittances. More action is needed to include older people in programmes and data to secure better outcomes of HIV/AIDS programmes, given that older relatives are the main carers for orphaned children and also contract HIV/AIDS. There is also a need for action on food security and agriculture in terms of age awareness — it is the older farmer that stays on to work depleted lands without regular input and support while the children leave in search of work elsewhere.

16. Older people and dependent children are those that stay behind, struggling to survive in the most environmentally damaged areas most affected by climate change.

17. Recent research by HelpAge International on action on ageing in emergency situations has revealed the shocking statistic that only 0.2 per cent of emergency funding targets older people.[1]

18. Health policies are still slow to act on chronic, life-limiting health problems, often treatable at low cost, but which currently affect and impoverish with out-of-pocket health expenditure millions of older people also responsible for children.

19. The extent and nature of work in older age requires special attention since even if a minimum of social protection is provided in older age, work is liable to

[1] HelpAge International, "A study of humanitarian financing for older people" (London, 2010).

continue until very old age, often in environments where "decent work" is very elusive and which are insecure, poorly paid and inappropriate. For example, China's working age population will probably peak around 2015, at about 1 billion, with a total population projected to peak around 2030. China's workforce will rapidly age; the number of young workers is already declining.

Way ahead

20. Global and national action must be taken to include and reach chronically poor households with co-dependent children and older people. Failure to act challenges the potential achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and global health and HIV/AIDS goals. Some concrete actions are as follows:

- Develop global and national poverty and Millennium Development Goals programmes, use age-disaggregated poverty and human development data, and adapt indicators to show progress on reducing the extreme poverty of older people
- Promote national and global investments in building the "enabling environment for ageing", including in emergency situations, to support urban, rural, social, fiscal and environmental planning in the range of low- and middle-income countries that are dealing with the demographic transition
- Promote recognition of and support for older people as contributors to intergenerational poverty reduction and support their efforts to build their own and their dependants' resilience, including in areas affected by environmental hazard and climate change
- Put in place costed anti-poverty programmes to implement the social protection floor package agreed by United Nations agencies in 2009 and Member States at the Millennium Development Goals High-level Plenary Meeting held in 2010
- Ensure inclusion of the perspectives of ageing into development by listening to and acting on the voices and lived experiences of older people worldwide; an essential mechanism for policy adjustments necessary to rise to the challenge of the demographic transition

21. The bottom-up review and appraisal process of the Plan of Action, agreed to by Member States in 2005, offers a unique opportunity for the global community to demonstrate its compliance with its commitments, especially commitments on poverty reduction. Action on older peoples poverty, and thereby intergenerational poverty, will be a major step forward within a global recovery package centred on the fight against poverty.

22. The global community of older women and men are ready to work with their elected representatives and the international community to fulfil these common goals.

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Statement submitted by Company of the Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

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Please recycle

Statement*

Introduction

1. One of the resolutions adopted at the forty-eighth session of the Commission for Social Development, on the theme "Social integration", contains many important principles and policy recommendations that, when implemented, will make a significant difference in the lives of people living in poverty.

2. In 2010, the Non-Governmental Organizations Committee for Social Development, in collaboration with the United Nations Non-Governmental Liaison Service, conducted a survey to determine what level of awareness existed in the non-governmental organizations community concerning the resolution and what new programmes had been initiated in response to the policy recommendations.

3. The survey elicited 180 responses from 60 countries: from the region of the Economic Commission for Africa (48 responses from 20 countries); from the region of the Economic Commission for Europe (51 responses from 11 countries); from the region of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (26 responses from 13 countries); from the region of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (50 responses from 13 countries); and from the region of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (5 responses from 3 countries).

4. Awareness of the resolution among the respondents varied from "very aware" (30 countries) to "not at all aware" (20 countries). For the majority of the respondents, there were only "some" (67) or "very little" (53) awareness. The survey indicates that a significant number of programmes have been initiated in each of the specified areas. An even larger number of development policies promoting gender equality and the elimination of discrimination, abuse and violence have been initiated.

5. New programmes were addressed by countries in the following areas:

- *Responses to the basic needs of people living in poverty*: sanitation (75), water (103), nutrition (84), education (39), employment (66) and health services (125).
- *Effective participation of the people*: in civic activities (98), social (120), economic (84) and political life (83).
- *Universal access to social protection for*: workers in the formal sector (111), workers in the informal sector (55), the unemployed including persons with disabilities, the sick and the elderly (84).
- *Development policies promoting gender equality*: women have equal access to employment opportunities (117), women are compensated for their work in the informal sector (64), women have the right to inheritance (107), women have the right to own property (122), new policies to eliminate discrimination (99), to protect against physical/sexual violence (112), to protect against domestic violence (112) and women have equal access to decision-making positions in governments (91).

* Issued without formal editing.

Concrete implementation recommendations

6. Several major themes emerged in response to the open-ended question: "What one or two concrete suggestions do you have for the implementation of the policy recommendations during the coming year?".

Enforcing existing laws and policies

7. Many good policies exist. In many cases, however, policies are on paper but are not implemented. For implementation to be effective, it must be supported by a strong commitment by the Government and at the grass-roots level and it must be continuous.

Enhancing participation by civil society and grass roots

8. Knowledge of policies and access to their benefits must be widely and easily accessible. Citizens should be at the heart of any process, from the planning and design stages through its implementation and its monitoring to its evaluation. Participation of community members, especially those members who are most vulnerable, is imperative so that people can be agents of their own development and sustainable solutions to urgent problems can be implemented.

9. It would be especially useful if equal partnerships for meaningful participation between Government officials and civil society were established to provide a framework for exchange of information, planning and implementation of policies and programmes.

Ensuring access to information

10. A dominant theme that surfaced repeatedly was that so much needed to be done in the areas of poverty eradication, people participation, gender equality, the elimination of discrimination, abuse and violence. It was crucial that the contents of the resolution be brought to the attention of more people through mass media, and through new media such as social networking websites like Facebook and Twitter.

11. Information should be made available to those who do not have easy access to information, such as prisoners, people living in remote areas, and those who do not attend school. Modern communication technology, distance learning education, grass-roots education, use of newspapers, television, and press conferences are all useful means of communication. This information should be promulgated in schools, lycées and in professional training centres. Only informed citizens can monitor the implementation of government commitments and hold them accountable.

12. People need to be informed that a resolution exists, that Governments have committed to improving the conditions of their citizens, and that all citizens have a right to health, education, decent housing, and job opportunities.

Eliminating corruption

13. The level of corruption has reached alarming proportions, even at the highest State levels. Strict monitoring of Governments is needed to ensure that money set aside for the completion of the Millennium Development Goals be stringently followed and corruption be sternly dealt with. Funds received should be audited so

that they benefit the most vulnerable people. It is important that all fight earnestly and sincerely against corruption and administrative apathy in implementing these laws. Governments must have the political will to stamp out corruption and seek the effective participation of the powerful and the rich who have both resources and expertise to help their country.

Continuing to focus on women's equality

14. Governments are urged to legislate for gender equity in education and for legal rights to inheritance and land-ownership. Access to decent work and to positions of leadership and decision-making positions are very limited in many countries. Protection against discrimination, physical and sexual violence, and provision for health-care services for women infected with HIV/AIDS are other areas that need urgent attention.

Addressing needs of migrants/immigrants/refugees

15. Immigration is a pressing problem of our time and can only be managed to the extent that Governments provide indispensable safe living conditions conducive to human development, assuring health services, education, social services and opportunities for decent work for citizens and non-citizens alike. There is urgent need for immigration reform. Protection of foreign workers from exploitation and specific programmes that facilitate social inclusion of foreigners and minorities are urgently needed.

Focusing of the most vulnerable in providing basic needs and services

16. The gap between the rich and poor is ever widening. Resources should be distributed based on people's needs, with particular attention given to vulnerable groups such as persons with disabilities, prisoners, the elderly and people living with mental illness. Governments need to be held accountable. Education, formation and skill-building for young people, especially girls, and for people living in rural areas are recurring themes in the recommendations.

Increasing efforts to address societal divisions (caste, race, religion)

17. Survey respondents stated that all divisions based on caste, creed, religion, gender, or language must be eliminated from all spheres of society so as to effectively execute existing policies. It is these prejudices which divide societies and deter the implementation of policies.

18. Social inclusion will be enhanced by eliminating development policies and practices based on ethnic, religious and political discrimination. The terms "minority" and "majority" based on religion and ethnicity should be abolished.

Putting in place a monitoring mechanism

19. A number of respondents reiterated the need to have a transparent mechanism put in place at local, national and international levels to monitor the effective implementation of policies by all stakeholders including civil society.

20. Governments are to be commended for the programmes and policies that have been documented in the survey. The recommendations from the grass roots are a plea to continue to respond to the needs of people living in poverty. A group of 10

children from Africa who responded to the survey stated that they wanted the Government to provide maternal health because they didn't want their mothers to die in childbirth.

Note: Statement also endorsed by the following non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Council: Citizens United for Rehabilitation of Errants, Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, Dominican Leadership Conference, International Association of Schools of Social Work, International Presentation Association of the Sisters of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Salesian Missions, Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur, UNANIMA International and Vivat International.